2002-03 has emphasized that exports hold the key to achieving a sustainable balance between the requirement of higher growth and ensuring viability of external sector.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Promotion of exports is one of the five priorities envisaged in the Union Budget 2003-04. Several measures covering merchandise goods and services exports have been taken in the Union Budget 2003-04. These include reduction in custom duty on imports of capital goods and other inputs required for export production, income tax concessions to industries/services sectors having export potential, enhanced outlay for infrastructure sector which will help exports, measures to help Special Economic Zones and a number of trade facilitation measures all of which would go a long way in strengthening the export efforts of the country.

Competitiveness of Indian Exports in International Market

†4488. SHRI DATTA MEGHE : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian exports have not yet become competitive in international market in terms of cost and quality due to which we have not been able to achieve success in the field of exports;

(b) whether annual export of India is still hanging around 5 billion dollars;

(c) if so, whether Indian goods are in position to compete in international market in terms of cost and quality; and

(d) if so, the details of efforts being made by Government to suitably amend the export policy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI) : (a) to (c) No, Sir. Indian exports are competitive both in terms of cost and quality and the annual export of India is not 5 billion dollars, in fact, India's exports of merchandise goods is US $ 51.7 billion in 2002-03. India has attained a growth rate of 18.05% exceeding the target of 12% despite the depressing World Economic and Trade Environment. As per WTO, India's export growth rate in 2002 at 15 % is the second highest among the thirty leading exporters of merchandise goods in the world. All this reflects the level of India's export competitiveness in the global market.

(d) Export promotion being a constant endeavour a medium term Export Strategy to be co-terminus with the Tenth Plan Period (2002-07) was announced in January, 2002 with the objective of achieving 1% of world exports. In line with

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

this strategy, a number of programmes/schemes have been launched which include schemes like Assistance to States for Developing Export Infrastructure (ASIDE), establishing Agri Export Zones, Market Access Initiative, strengthening "Focus LAC" programme, introducing "Focus Africa" programme, etc. In the Exim Policy 2003-04, besides, the focus on Service exports, policies have been devised to strengthen Special Economic Zones (SEZs), 100% Export Oriented Units (EOUs), etc. A new programme called "Focus CIS" has been introduced. Thus measures are being taken from time to time to increase India's share in world exports.

Authenticity of ISO certifying agencies

4489. SHRI B.P. SINGHAL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any system to check if ISO certifying agencies which have issued certificates were actually authorised to do so;

(b) if not, the credibility or authenticity of such certificates;

(c) whether Government are aware that in the reimbursement proforma there is no provision to ensure that an SSI unit is actually complying with ISO norms and standards, before the reimbursement is sanctioned;

(d) if so, why this should not be made mandatory before reimbursement is given; and

(e) the details of subsidies and all schemes which are currently in vogue in granting of subsidies for obtaining ISO certification ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYASAGAR RAO) : (a) and (b) At present, the activities of Indian/foreign agencies granting ISO 9000 and ISO 14001 certificate operating in India are not being monitored by any Government agency as the process of certification is voluntary and not mandatory. There is no process for official registration of such ISO certifying agency. The certificates that are being issued by the certification bodies which are signatory to the Multilateral Arrangement (MLA) of mutual recognition are considered credible and authentic. The accreditation mark on the certificate is the authority for the certifying agency to issue the certificates. The accreditation mark can also be verified by any individual or department to verify the authority to issue ISO certificates. The validity and scope of the accreditation of the certifying agency can be verified from the website of the respective accreditation council. The